

Post



Scott Farnsworth

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Four in France become six in Spain - May 24, 2025

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SUMMARY

Packed up and said a sad goodbye to the lovely Chantaco hotel. Took a taxi into Saint-Jean for some last minute shopping and a funny breakfast. A quick bus ride took us to San Sebastián, Spain, a very pretty city. Met up with other Austin friends Mike and Liz Dundov who will be traveling with us for the next eight days. Had a late lunch, as is the custom in Spain. Attempted to exercise off the meal with a long walk through the old city and around Concha Beach. Happy hour at the rooftop bar of Dundov's hotel for drinks and sunburn watching. Long walk to very good dinner at Usarbi. - Karen

DETAIL

France, it's been swell, but we're leaving you for Spain (for a while). Today, if all goes according to plan, we'll be going by bus an hour south of here, to San Sebastián, Spain, aka Donostia, as it's called in the Basque language.

Our morning and move out are pretty typical, involving packing, coffee, and paying for our room. We walked the 30 minutes into town the other day, but that was without luggage, so today we get a taxi. It turns out to be an EV, a Ford Mustang (what's called an 'e-pony'). It was comfortable and quiet.

In town we go to the wine store to replace what we drank last night, and we go to the post office. Everywhere we go we have our daypacks on our backs and our luggage in tow. Not the funnest way to travel.

We haven't had coffee or breakfast so we find a place. We asked at the wine store (Nicolas) where we can get coffee and a croissant. I think this is a simple question, but that depends. Do we want good ones? The best of each? Sitting? To go? He can tell us where to get good coffee, but their croissants suck. He can tell us where to get good croissants but they don't sell coffee. Sigh.

We find a place, with tables outside in the shade but each table only has two chairs. No worries, we start to move two chairs (and place settings) over and you'd think the world had ended. We can't do that! We can't even sit there for coffee/breakfast at all, even if we sit only two to a table. We have to sit inside! The lunch place setting has a WHITE paper napkin and breakfast can only be done with RED AND WHITE CHECKED paper napkins (duh!).

Ron and Karen briefly try to argue it but soon realize it's futile. Inside breakfast and coffee are both very good. As we're eating some other numb-nutz dolt tourist outside thinks they can sit at a lunch table for breakfast. All servers drop what they're doing and scramble out there to set them straight. Too funny.

We wait for our bus and the appointed time comes and goes. No bus. We get nervous and I check my email. There's a note from the bus company telling me the bus will be ten minutes late. No worries. The drive to San Sebastián is uneventful. Off the bus I take the mass of humanity around us to gauge whether the Spanish are as good looking as the French, more? less? I quickly realize a bus station is NOT the place to be doing that.

We walk to our hotel, luggage in tow. It's about a twenty minute walk, but the temperature is in the low 60s, with blue sky and sunshine, so we don't mind. We're walking most of the way along a river that leads to the sea. It's picturesque.

Checking in to our hotel, the mannerisms of the Spanish (versus the French) become obvious. We paid a deposit for our rooms. Now we pay for the first night. At the end of the stay we'll sort everything out. We are confused and intimate that this seems overly complex and confusing. The sheepish older Spaniard behind the counter raises his eyebrows and shoulders, smiles, and look up as to say "Yes, I agree, but I don't make the rules... what can you do, you know?" We do. We guess he's heard this complaint every day for many years. Welcome to Spain.

By now it's early afternoon, well into time for lunch. We have a reservation for six as we'll be linking up with Austin friends Mike and Liz who have been also traveling around (for them, Spain). The pedestrian streets of the old town are busy, as it is lunch time for the locals, but we're able to link up. Hugs, kisses, catching up and then off to lunch. It's good and seemingly a price performer. We will come to see that's the way here, and we're OK with that.

After lunch we walk through town a bit and then walk the very long seawall above the beach. Judging from how many other people are walking with us, this is the thing to do here. We see two churches/cathedrals and eventually wind up on the roof of Mike and Liz's hotel for drink. Everyone seems to be having either Aperol Spritzes or Tinto de Verona, and we follow suit. Very refreshing. We sip and catch up.

We also have a reservation for dinner (at 8:00) and walking down the main pedestrian boulevard in town it seems no one is home. Everyone is out walking. If you're a burglar now's the time to break into houses. Everyone is out.

We're two minutes late for our reservation when Liz's phone rings. It's the restaurant. Yes we're coming. We're four minutes away (don't give away our table). Dinner's excellent and again a price performer. We get to see the chef and tell him everything was delicious. On our walk home it's late but it's still light out. You have to love Europe in the summer. It is nippy. We have to remember to bring our wraps. Such a problem to have.

Photos



Our 'sitting room' where we had two dinners, cocktails, and many a morning coffee.



One last breakfast in France. Inside as we're not allowed to sit at the open tables outside. Why? Indoor tables have red gingham paper napkins. Outdoor tables have white paper napkins. Are we clear?!



Walking to the bus station in France (Saint-Jean-de-Luz). Behind us is the central covered market (Les Halles).



In Spain (San Sabastian) walking to our hotel. Crossing the tidal river that runs through town. Lots of tile sidewalks.



We meet up with Mike and Liz and we're up to six. The band is back together again. Plenty of sunshine and blue sky for all.



The old narrow streets of old town. The whole place burned down just before the French left and the English took over (or was it the other way around. Only this street was spared. As such, everything in town (almost entirely) is between 100 and 200 years old.



Lunch. I get a salad. Tomatoes, lettuce, and belly. Pork belly? No (thank goodness). It's tuna belly, aka 'bonita'. Good part of a good tuna. From a tuna can like ours but much larger. Delish.



Time for a (loong) walk, er promenade, along the seawall. Lots out doing the same. Beauty everywhere you look.



Down the walk we can see more sea wall that we'll be walking. The beaches are pretty full but there's room for more. The tide is high so less beach accessible than at other times of day.



Good Shepherd Cathedral. It looks old but was built in 1896. It begs the question: How big was the party in 1996? Not big. When the cathedral was built it was (close to) a sad time in the city/country's history. The fire, and two years later Cuba gained independence from Spain, and similarly for the Phillipines. All the cool kids had colonies and the Spanish, not so much. Whaaa!



Cool projection of the sunlight through the (not old) stained glass.



From the bar atop Mike and Liz's hotel.
The island in the middle of the bay, with
it's one building and always lots of boats
and swimmers in the bay.



Feeling no  from the two rounds of
Aperol Spritzes and Tinto de Veronas.
Time to head off for dinner. Dinner was so
good/fun we forgot to take pictures!



On the walk home. Crossing the city's tidal river. The tide is pretty low here. Our hotel is close to the right edge of the picture, The Hotel Parma. Spoiler alert: We're not in Parma.

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